FIAE Chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10 reflection

Grades should represent student’s level of mastery at the end of a unit. A main concern with grades is that they can be very subjective. If one school considers simply meeting the standard to be an A and another school considers exceeding the standard to be an A there will be a discrepancy between students skills at each school. Regardless of this disparity, the knowledge and skills student’s gain through a unit should be reflected in the final grade. If a student knows little on the unit topic at the beginning of the unit but grows and learns tremendously through to the end, they should have a high grade, if they are able to demonstrate their mastery proficiently at the end of the unit. The final grade should not reflect the student’s behavior throughout the unit. If a student knows and is able to successfully demonstrate their knowledge but was absent half the days, their grade should reflect their academics not their personal habits. This philosophy echoes real world situations. If an employee consistently performs their job duties successfully they will be rewarded. The employer may not like it if they continually miss work, but if it does not interfere with performance, the employer would be satisfied. The teacher and employer should challenge a student and an employee who are consistently absent. If grades are focused on academics I, as a teacher, could spend more time and effort creating engaging and meaningful lessons than grading student’s effort, attendance and behavior. If such important and noteworthy lessons occur everyday students who miss them or misbehave would be compelled to attend and pay attention in class. This would enable all students to learn and to successfully demonstrate mastery thus earning desirable grades.

After determining what to grade there are several practices to avoid guaranteeing successful and accurate grading. The central theme of these practices is the make certain that grades be a sign of student mastery, this can be done by grading individuals not groups, by providing assistance when needed and by providing feedback for homework assignments, as homework is simply practice. I found this section helpful as this book clearly indicates what the ineffective grading methods are and explains why they are ineffective. One point I found particularly insightful was ‘avoid penalizing multiple attempts at mastery’. This really emphasized the notion that all students learn at different rates, just because one student understood a concept in 2 days while another student understood after 2 weeks does not mean one has mastered the concept more than the other. If both students express their proficiency equally they have earned the same grade. This idea is similar to the topic of the final chapter that described when it is appropriate to allow students to redo work. I agreed that students should redo work when they can recognize where they made mistakes and understand how to correct the errors. One suggestion from another teacher mentioned in this book was to have students write an analysis of a their test summarizing their errors, explaining why they arrived at the incorrect answer and providing the correct answer. When using this method students must reflect on past work and determine how to proceed forward at the same time showing mastery of the content.